

CORE CREEK COUNTY BRIDGE
(Bucks County Bridge 304)

HAER No. PA-307

Spanning Core Creek, approximately 1 mile
south of Traffic Route 332 (Newtown Bypass)
in the vicinity of Newtown
Bucks County
Pennsylvania

HAER
PA
9-NEWTON
4-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
National Park Service
Northeast Region
Philadelphia Support Office
U.S. Custom House
200 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, P.A. 19106

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Location: Spanning Core Creek, approximately 1 mile south of Traffic Route 332 (Newtown Bypass) in the vicinity of Newtown, Bucks County, Pennsylvania.

UTM Coordinates: Zone 18; N - 4,451,820; E - 508,300
Quad: Langhorne, PA

Date of Construction: 1875

Present Owner: County of Bucks
Doylestown, Pennsylvania

Present Use: Vehicular and pedestrian bridge.

Significance: The Core Creek County Bridge (Bucks County Bridge 304) over Core Creek is a two span masonry arch structure. The Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Officer has determined that the bridge is eligible for listing to the National Register of Historic Places. The bridge is an excellent example of a small masonry arch constructed in the latter part of the 19th century. It embodies the distinctive characteristics of the type and method of construction employed during that period. The bridge was constructed by Jesse Black, builder of numerous bridges during the period. Mr. Black was also a former Bucks County Commissioner.

Project Information: This documentation was undertaken by the County of Bucks in accordance with a request from the Bureau for Historic Preservation at the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission. The recordation serves as a mitigation measure prior to the replacement of the bridge. The construction of this project will be completed using a combination of state and county monies, there is no federal funding in the project.

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Bridge History

In 1860, a group of residents in northeast Middletown Township petitioned Bucks County to construct a bridge over Core Creek. The petition, in part, read as follows:

*To the Hon., the Judges of the Court of Quarter Sessions
of the County of Bucks at Febr. Term, AD 1860*

*The petition of the Subscribers, Citizens of Middletown
Township and its vicinity in Said County*

Respectively Represents -

*That a Bridge is much wanted over
Core Creek, at the place where the public highway crosses the Said
Creek, in the Township aforesaid, on or near the line dividing
the lands of John S. Janney and Amos Courson, (Said road leading
from Newtown to Oxford). The ford there being frequent rendered
impassible by reason of ice and high waters - And that the expense
thereof would be too heavy and burdensome upon the inhabitants of
said Township.*

*Your Petitioners therefore prey your
honours, to take such Order in the premises, as is your wisdom shall
seem, meet and consult with the Acts of General Assembly in such
case made and provided And they as in duty will pray to.*

The petition contained some 31 signatures.

On February 11, 1860, a court order appointed three individuals as viewers, who... "after being respectively Sworn and affirmed to perform the duties of their appointment with impartially and fidelity are to view the place proposed for said bridge and if they view the same and if they or any two of the actual viewers agree that there is occasion for such a Bridge and that the erecting of the said bridge would require more expense than it is reasonable the said Township should bear and make report accordingly. And that the said viewers are further authorized to examine the route of said road crossing the said creek, over which the said bridge is prayed for, and if in their opinion a change or variation in the bed of the road would be an improvement and saving of expense in the erection of said bridge, they are to make report thereof, and cause such variation to be accurately surveyed and make a map or plot thereof, which shall accompany said report: and make report to the next Court of Quarter Sessions of the Peace to be held for said County of Bucks".

The three viewers reported to the court on March 15, 1860 that they... "were of the opinion that a bridge was badly wanted for the accommodation of the Public and that the Expense of such a Bridge as the said creek would require would be more than the said Township of Middletown should pay. We do report that it would be just and right for the County of Bucks to erect a County Bridge on the bed of said Road over said Creek".

The report of the viewers was filed April 23, 1860 in open court. On April 24, 1860, a Grand Jury did not concur with the report of the viewers, and the petition was rejected.

The request for a bridge crossing Core Creek languished for the next 12 years. Then on May 2, 1872 another petition was filed with Bucks County. A report from the viewers was filed on September 12, 1872, again recommending that the county construct a bridge. This time the recommendation was concurred with by the courts. It took nearly three more years before the bridge would be constructed.

In the spring of 1875 the Commissioners of Bucks County advertised that bids would be taken for the construction of a bridge over Core Creek at Janneys Mill in Newtown Township (Editor's Note: The location of the project was actually in Middletown Township. Janneys Mill was on the township line between Middletown and Newtown Townships). On Tuesday, June 1, 1875 the commissioners met and opened bids for three bridges. The minutes of the meeting read in part as follows:

...and at 3 o'clock proceeded to open proposals for bridge over Core Creek at Janneys Mill in Newtown Township which were as follows

<i>Geo. C. Causant</i>	<i>\$1,697</i>
<i>Jesse Black</i>	<i>1,272</i>
<i>Jno Cozeus & Jno Steever</i>	<i>2,245</i>
<i>Thomas McAdams</i>	<i>2,900</i>
<i>J. Moore Humphrey</i>	<i>2,990</i>
<i>Wm. G. Smith</i>	<i>2,200</i>
<i>C. Magennis</i>	<i>4,870</i>
<i>Stacy C. Buckman</i>	<i>2,490</i>
<i>J. V. & Peter Staates</i>	<i>1,648</i>
<i>H. H. Landis</i>	<i>1,350</i>
<i>Preston & Flack</i>	<i>\$1,933</i>
<i>Peter S. Naylor</i>	<i>1,940</i>

When Jesse Black being the lowest bidder for the County Line (Editor's Note: One of the other three bridges let that day was a stone arch bridge over Southampton Creek on the Bucks/Montgomery County line) and Core Creek Bridges was awarded the contract for the same.

Bridge Description

The Core Creek County Bridge over Core Creek in Middletown Township, Bucks County, Pennsylvania is a two span masonry arch structure located approximately 1.5 miles southeast of the Borough of Newtown. The bridge is within the boundary of Core Creek County Park. It is used by both vehicles and pedestrians. Historically, the bridge was referred to as Core Creek County Bridge. It is also identified as Bucks County Bridge 304.

The bridge is constructed of red/brown sandstone and consists of two, semi-circular arches with spans of 14'6" each. The intrados on each arch has been parged with mortar. Arch height above the spring line is approximately 5'. The spring line is approximately 3' above normal water level. The arches are supported on a 3' wide center pier. The voussoirs are made of cut sandstone. The spandrel walls between the voussoirs and the bottom of the parapets are recessed approximately 4" (see Photographs PA 307-3 and 4). The stone in the spandrels and parapets above the arches are laid up in a semi-coursed rubble pattern. The abutments and pier have been reinforced with concrete encasements (see Photograph PA 307-5). These encasements are 12" to 14" thick along the length of the abutments and pier. On the pier, the encasements extends 18" upstream and 37" downstream from the spandrels. The encasements sit on concrete footings which extend below the water line. The footings area approximately 6" wider than the concrete encasements.

The total cartway width between parapets is approximately 17'6". The parapets above the arches are between 28" and 36" high. The wing wall on the southeast quadrant is 52' in length and varies from 22" to 36" in height above the roadway. Approximately 33' at the end of this wall has been totally reconstructed. The wing wall on the southwest quadrant is 58' in length and varies from 20" to 36" in height above the roadway. The walls on the south approach flair from a width of 17'6" at the arches to a width of 21'8" at the ends of the walls. The wing wall on the northeast quadrant is 42' in length and varies in height from 16" to 36" above the roadway. This wall is partially supported with a masonry buttress 6' wide, 3' deep, and 5'6" high. It is located adjacent to the northern abutment (see Photograph PA 307-4). The wing wall on the northwest quadrant is 36'6" in length and varies in height from 9" to 36" above the roadway. The walls on the north approach flair from a width of 17'6" at the arches to 22'3" at the ends of the walls. The wing walls and parapets are approximately 20" in width. They are topped with concrete capping which is 24" wide and 4" in thickness. The maximum height above original ground is approximately 10'5". The stone in the wing walls is laid up in a random rubble pattern.

A 24" wide by 20" high marble bridge plaque is located at mid-span on the eastern parapet. The plaque reads:

Core Creek County Bridge
1875
Abm. Thompson
Chas. B. Yost Commissioners
Samuel Keller

Jesse Black - Bridge Contractor

The contractor for this bridge was Jesse Black. Prior to the time Mr. Black constructed bridges in Bucks County he served as County Commissioner. Mr. Black was sworn in as a commissioner on December 2, 1861. He served in this position until he vacated his seat on November 20, 1865.

During the 1870's, Mr. Black constructed a number of bridges in Bucks County. These bridges and their construction costs include:

California Bridge (1874)	\$1,475
Southampton Creek Bridge (1875)	825
Kintnersville Bridge (1877)	572

Mr. Black also submitted proposals on numerous other bridge replacement projects during this time. He entered these proposals both by himself or in partnership with other contractors such as Joseph G. Preston or H. H. Landis.

Records of the minutes of the Bucks County Commissioners for the years 1890 through 1903 are not available. Therefore, it is not possible to determine if Jesse Black was awarded any additional construction contracts during this period. His name does not appear in the commissioners meeting minutes subsequent to 1903.

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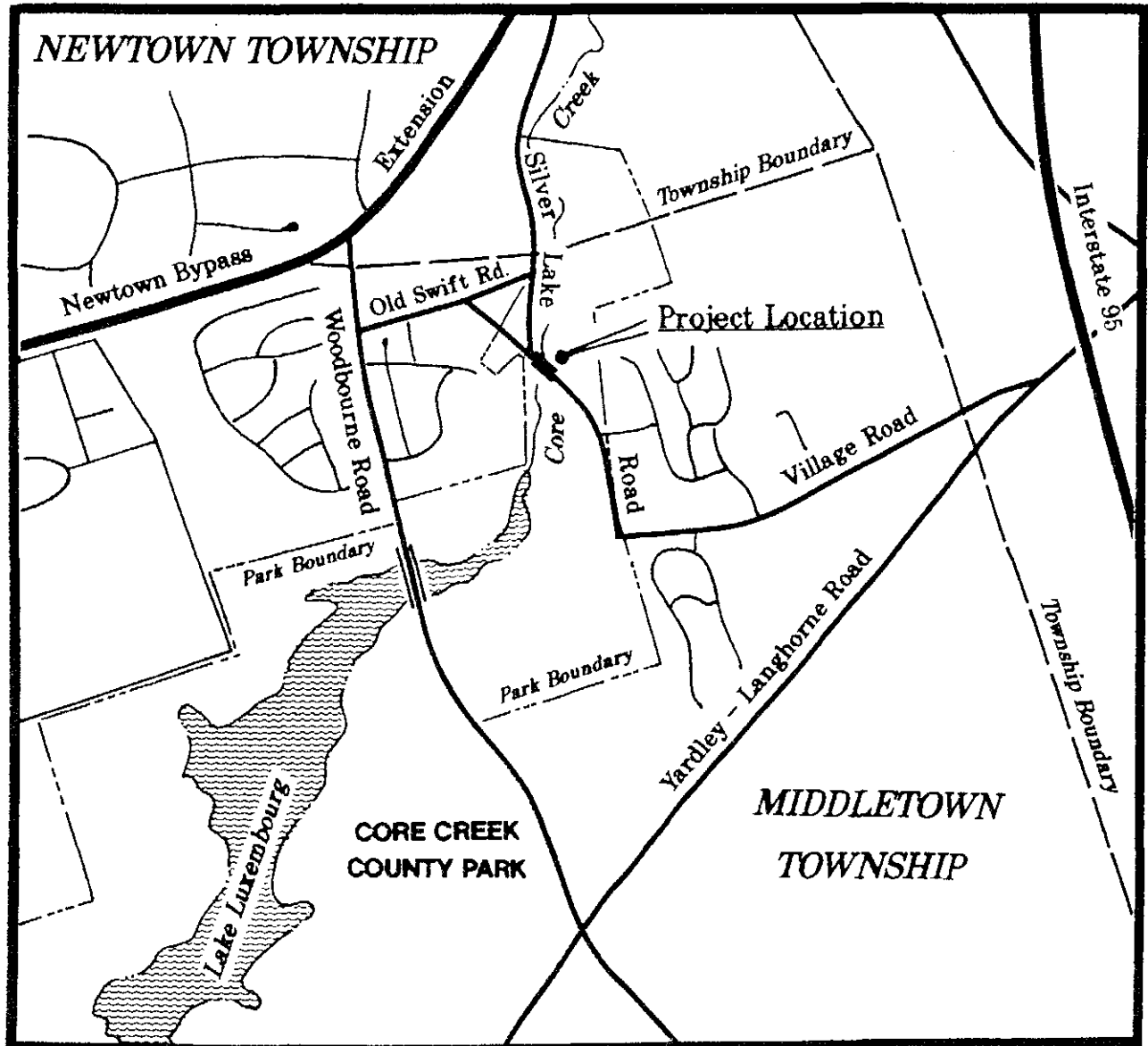
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Scale



PROJECT LOCATION MAP